

there is not one complete poem by John Donne, for example, though three fragments of Donne poems occur in the notes. Walter de la Mare, that is to say, was tuned primarily to one voice of English poetry and only one. And in the exclusion of all else lies the particular strength and flavor of this collection. When the reader's mood is for the trilled note, this is the book to reach for, and bless it for being there. There is nothing in English, moreover, quite as charmingly learned and provocative as de la Mare's comments on these poems in his final section of notes, "About and Roundabout." If there is a child in the family, or if one has himself been a child at some time, this is certainly one of the books that needs to be built into what used to be called "the family" before the demon ad man came up with "togetherness."

A totally different voice of English poetry arises from Vivian de Sola Pinto's and Allen Edwin Rodway's *"The Common Muse,"* subtitled "An Anthology of Popular British Ballad Poetry, XVth-XXth Century" (Philosophical Library, \$10). Here the voice is round, good-humoredly cynical, and straight from the streets, with some specimens (discreetly relegated to appendices) that will have to be put down as outright bawdy, and then some. This is the voice of the Broadside, of the street-hawker, of the laborer, and of the soldier. A man with a guitar will find the ballads of this "suppressed voice" a treasure trove for his repertoire (he will have to dig up his own music). The non-ballad singer will find his reward in the knack and knock of the common speech finding its way to form. No music from green thickets here, but rather the voice of what sings in alleys. And if not "great literature" (whatever that means), these broadside ballads are as rightful descendants as any of the folk ballad tradition. One has only to put "The Common Muse" beside such a collection of "folk" ballads as Albert B.

Friedman's *"The Viking Book of Folk Ballads of the English Speaking World"* (Viking, \$4.95) to see the line of descent—and to provide himself with happy reading in the most direct and most rollicking of the voices of English poetry.

—JOHN CIARDI.

**FROM A VIOLENT WORLD:** Since Marianne Moore, W. H. Auden, and Stephen Spender have been unanimous in choosing Ted Hughes's poems for the YM-YWHA First Publication Award, it would be any reviewer's hard work to argue their choice. But it's good to be able to say that they chose well for *"The Hawk in the Rain"* (Harper, \$2.75) is a tough-minded book of first poems which have a fibre that is their own. Sometimes, as in the title poem, the syntax is as rough as the prosody, but both are only a measure of the violent world from which Ted Hughes writes. If he is inclined toward raw adjectives which sometimes call more attention to themselves than to the world they qualify, he dramatizes at his best human hurt and integrity with a verbal energy that has been rare in recent English poetry, so that it is perhaps not surprising that such periodical publication as these poems have previously found has been in America. But it is to America that Mr. Hughes has now come with his American wife (who, as Sylvia Plath, owns some fine poems herself), and to read his penetrating "Famous Poet" is to know how rightly his defenses are arranged against what this country can do to the luck that comes from abroad—whether England or Wales.

Luckiest of all, Ted Hughes's poems keep measuring the empty gap between what *seems* and what *is*, and even in the gentle lyricism of "The Dove Breeder," the depth of his perception is as sure as in the modest "Modest Proposal" or the climactic "Martyrdom of Bishop Farrar." Mr. Hughes is a young poet in his tendency to overwrite, but he is also young in his refusal to cater to any-

thing but his own demand for honest poems, and there is every evidence in this first book that both he and such poems will age well.

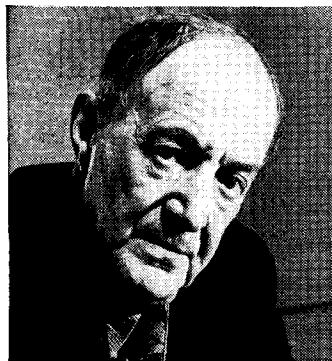
—PHILIP BOOTH.

**POEMS OF A PRIEST:** For a first book of poetry, Father Daniel Berrigan's *"Time Without Number"* (Macmillan, \$2.75) speaks with remarkable precision. Yet its craftsmanship cannot obscure the work's indebtedness, not only to the general tradition of the lyric, but more specifically to individual poets. "You may decline a whole night of stars / by lighting or snuffing a candle in a closet" *sounds* like Marianne Moore. Hopkins comes through in "Christ, to whose eyes flew, / whose human heart knew, or furious or slow, / the dark wingbeat of time . . ."; while Cummings might have said of poetry, "make it plain with death / and bitter as remember." Whole poems would have to be transcribed to illustrate the tonal relationship to Thomas's lyrics, and the suggestions of MacLeish are too fleeting to be captured out of context.

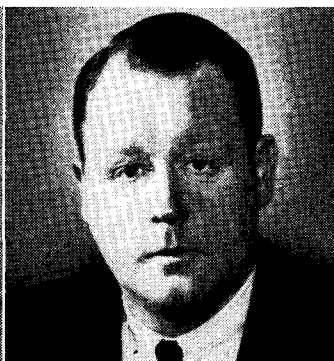
Yet the final personality is Father Berrigan's, and the poetry, particularly in its devotional aspects, blending religion and nature, is sincere in its emotions. Perhaps, after all, it is ungrateful to quibble because good and readable poetry is not great.

—ROBERT D. SPECTOR.

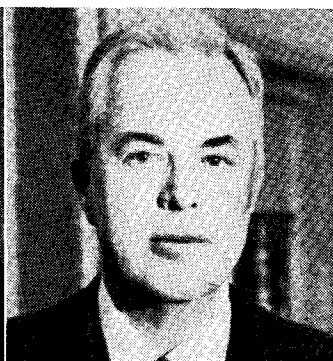
**THE EBULLIENT WHITMAN:** In *"A Critical Guide to Leaves of Grass"* (University of Chicago Press, \$6) James E. Miller, Jr. has provided another of those useful guides to poetry which avoid biographical or psychoanalytical speculation by focusing on the verse itself. His structural analyses of Walt Whitman's better poems are models of technical skill and judicious restraint. In them he discovers thematic patterns and recurrent imagery which confirm Whitman as an artist in control of his materials. In them also he points to a remarkable consistency in the expression of ideas built upon the best liberal thought of Whitman's time



—John Gay, London.



Merrill Moore.



Robert Hillier.



Dante.

which make it necessary to accept the poet, for all his manifest shortcomings or his excesses of naïveté or enthusiasm, as the creator of a native epic which expresses better than any other a young nation's ebullient estimation of her powers and opportunities.

—LEWIS LEARY.

**A QUIET VOICE:** The chief virtue of Robert Hillyer's *"The Relic and Other Poems"* (Knopf, \$3.50) is technical competency in the traditional lyric forms. Permitting his meter to evoke a melancholy mood, Mr. Hillyer rarely raises his voice to a shrill note. These are mainly poems of quiet protest—against society's denuding of nature, against ugliness and destruction and especially against death. Repeatedly the poet sadly recalls feelings of his childhood:

I am afraid of time and of time's  
ending,  
As though the luminous evening  
now descending  
Were the world's last. I am afraid,  
afraid  
Of the dark plunge to endless  
repetition.

Although genuine, the sentiment is hardly profound. His simplicity suggests restraint, but in the section entitled "Observations," demanding philosophical depth, such habituated restraint is not enough. Here Hillyer substitutes a superficial wit, but the result should allay his fears of the New Critic, "Who makes obscure what once was fairly clear. . . ." These are not poems for explication. What they are, for better or worse, they most obviously are.

—ROBERT D. SPECTOR.

**MOMENTS IN THE WEST INDIES:** Tram Combs's *"Pilgrim's Terrace"* (Editorial La Nueva Salamanca, Puerto Rico; \$2) is one of the two substantial and original books of verse by a new poet which has come my way in the past several years. (The other: "The Hawk in the Rain," by Ted Hughes, reviewed on page 43.) In such a rare event, it seems both niggardly and beside the point to be critical. One remembers the criticisms that were made of Keats's first book, and indeed of his second and third books, but one also remembers that, although all of the criticisms stand up today, the critics who made them would, if they were brought back to life, wish they had kept their peace.

This is a loose-jointed book and a loose-jointed poet—the most difficult and hazardous way to write, surely; yet Tram Combs gets away with it through sheer talent, forthrightness, and unwillingness to use any of the familiar tricks of the trade. One of the

slightest of the poems will make the point:

last at night and in the earliest light  
your long eyes, and resin laugh  
are bright in the bed here

(like waters' fall in the mind's  
mountains  
storms, stars, burning beasts of seas,  
gods in lacquered niches)

I dream your arms and pits  
in the strands of sleep  
mould you—toes, thighs, tongue

It's as deceptively simple as that. The book is a journal of occasional poems on moments in the West Indies. Some are about no more than flowers, cats, and the patterns of light; some are about war and the travail of modern life; a few are addressed to the shades of such free, tortured, burning spirits as Emma Goldman and Hart Crane. The author grew up in the Deep South and lived for a while in the San Francisco area, where he must have learned a lot about writing without fancy circumlocutions and "metaphysics" from Kenneth Rexroth. Mr. Combs doesn't imitate Mr. Rexroth, however. Or anybody else. That is the miracle.

—S. R.

**A DOOR TO DANTE:** Dorothy L. Sayers's basic equipment as a commentator on Dante in her *"Further Papers on Dante"* (Harper, \$4) is devotion to her subject, enthusiasm, and the informed result of wide and seeking reading. These qualities make a combination that can well reward the reader who is willing to tolerate Miss Sayers's sense of the sprightly aside and her (to me, often offensive) convert's sense that in talking about Dante she must run in a bit of sneak-proselytizing for what turns out to be not exactly Dante's Catholicism but, oddly enough, its Anglican stepbrother. I can grow especially weary of the number of amateur critiques of the modern universe that Miss Sayers seems compelled to let go in the process of her discussions. Speaking as one reader, I am grateful to Miss Sayers for her insights on Dante and am happy to recommend them, but I should like to propose a simple reader-treaty: I shall promise to read happily what Miss Sayers has to say about Dante, if she will promise to leave my soul, my moral judgments, and the contemporary universe for me to think about on my own.

—J. C.

## Neuberger

Continued from page 11

istrator. He will have charge of the great new interstate road program. In his home state of New York, Mr. Tallamy supervised the 432-mile Thruway from New York City to Buffalo. Signs on the Thruway are restricted to neat, standardized panels which indicate the distance to a general "Service Area" or the fact that a gas station and coffee shop are one mile away. These signs are in precisely the same pattern as those which herald distance, speed limits, directions, or curves. Actual commercial or brand advertising, as such, is forbidden. Two or three times I asked Mr. Tallamy if roadside business had suffered as a result of these controls on signs and billboards. He always answered in the negative.

Despite so categorical a reply from a famous highway engineer with actual experience in this domain, the outdoor advertising companies insisted—right up to the hour that my bill was narrowly defeated in committee—that restrictions on billboards would seal the fate of small entrepreneurs pumping gas, serving food, or patting down beds beside the roads. Yet, if our highways are made more attractive to the eye, will not a larger number of nomads set out upon them with their families—and will not these people need all the commodities and services offered along the way?

With one breath the outdoor advertisers try to hide behind the backs of small locally-owned roadside facilities by mourning that these places will suffer in patronage if signs are controlled. But with their next gasp the advertising firms insist that the ugly signs are not those erected in the interest of the mighty national brand-name corporations but, rather, the on-the-premises signs heralding restaurants, motels, etc.

Regardless of the equity of this claim, it is academic. The new interstate highways are, by law, to be breached by only limited-access conduits of travel for reasons of safety. Motels and filling stations cannot hem in the interstate roads because such direct intrusion would be illegal. These accommodations will be clustered principally around the interchanges—near the widely-scattered clover-leaf turnoffs. My bill, for cooperative Federal-state regulation of signs, would allow a limited number of signs at the interchanges but—to all practical purposes—not in the open countryside.

Such concessions have never budged the big outdoor advertisers. Their appetite for plastering our nation's road-

